

Shifting the Paradigm: Changing How We Engage with Men

Presentation at the National Discussion on Sexual Assault & Harassment

United States Naval Academy

April 4, 2019

Barbara Cyr-Roman, SAPRO Director of Prevention Education

Judith E. Rosenstein, PhD, Associate Professor of Sociology

- Introduction
 - Unfortunately, my colleague and collaborator on our SHAPE Program curriculum is not with us today, as she is presenting in another location.
 - I will share with you this afternoon a brief overview of the process we used in shifting the way we engaged with the young men of the Brigade
- Background
 - Here at the Naval Academy, we have a robust peer education prevention program.
 - One component of that program is a single sex session devoted to the critical examination of socialization
 - Our men's session includes a discussion of how hegemonic masculinity can constrain men's behavior, facilitate sexual violence, and contribute to a hostile environment
 - For many years we approached this topic through the "man box" and other commonly used approaches
 - The feedback we received from our male audience was that it was not resonating, and worse, it was alienating them
 - So we clearly had to rethink our approach
 - Our primary challenge was connecting with the men. How do we connect??? Our conclusion: Make it about them
- Process of change: How do we do this?
 - Our process in revising our session had three components:
 - First, we reviewed existing literature to verify that we were still on point with our objectives and explore possible new strategies
 - Second, we examined existing prevention programs targeting men for new approaches
 - And third, we convened a working group of male stakeholders to develop and hone our approach and messaging
 - Upon reviewing existing literature, one pivotal research finding was that male rape myth (myths focusing on male victims) acceptance was associated with lower self-identified likelihood of intervention, suggested that decreasing myths about male rape victims might increase intervention & empathy. With this as our starting point, we developed content focusing on male rape myths, from the perspective of a male survivor, provided

an entry into male socialization that was personally relevant, and NOT “male bashing” (Rosenstein & Carroll 2015)

- Rosenstein, J. E., & Carroll, M. H. (2015). Male rape myths, female rape myths, and intent to intervene as a bystander. *Violence and Gender*, 2(4), 204-208
- Anderson, L. A., & Whiston, S. C. (2005). Sexual assault education programs: A meta-analytic examination of their effectiveness. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 29(4), 374-388.
- Brecklin, L. R., & Forde, D. R. (2001). A meta-analysis of rape education programs. *Violence and Victims*, 16(3), 303-321.
- Katz, J., & Moore, J. (2013). Bystander education training for campus sexual assault prevention: An initial meta-analysis. *Violence and Victims*, 28(6), 1054-1067
- We examined programs such as Men Can Stop Rape, A Call to Men, Green Dot, etc., for strategies on approach and rapport
 - These programs reinforced the importance of connection, building rapport, and vulnerability and authenticity
- Convened working group of men (peer educators, student allies, military officers involved in the program)
 - This working group reviewed and provided feedback on approach, materials, etc.
 - At their suggestion we added empowerment as male (military) leaders
 - As junior officers how can they be the force for change within their units?
- Pretested session and revised accordingly
 - 4 experienced peer educators [some part of working group], ~80 audience members
- What’s actually in this revised session?
 - Paradigm shift from direct and in your face (certain forms of masculinity are problematic), to compassionate empathy for men
 - We added a male sexual violence survivor story to uncover socialization messages men receive about their bodies, their sexual behavior, sexual expectations, and victimization
 - Half of the session talks about leadership and creating command climates where men

are able to verbalize their need for support - breaking down barriers to help-seeking and reaching out - destigmatizing men's need for support (depression, suicide) all things men are struggling with in and out of the military

- Destigmatizing helping seeking on an individual basis and also reducing the social repercussions for seeking help and reporting
- While we are sensitive to the concern that looking at male victimization shifts the focus away from women -- who are disproportionately the victims -- ...
- While we do not know if this revised session promotes introspection or behavioral change, we have seen a positive shift with our population
 - Critique of male bashing is now non-existent
 - Peer educators like the session "it gets good discussion going"
 - The Brigade tells us they are learning things they never learned before, felt uncomfortable, but now "get it"
 - Clearly the tone and content are connecting better
 - Aim:
 - Decrease in male rape myth acceptance
 - Increase in likelihood of bystander intervention
 - Increase survivor empathy
 - Decrease in victim blaming, shaming, etc.